Sekine's Love

Volume 5, Ch.24

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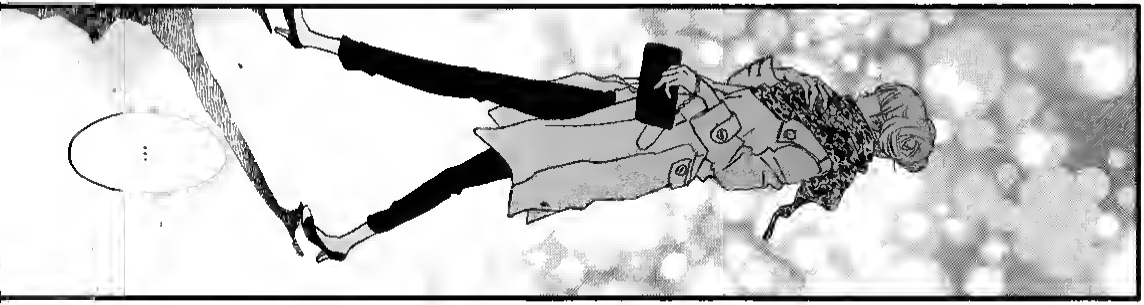
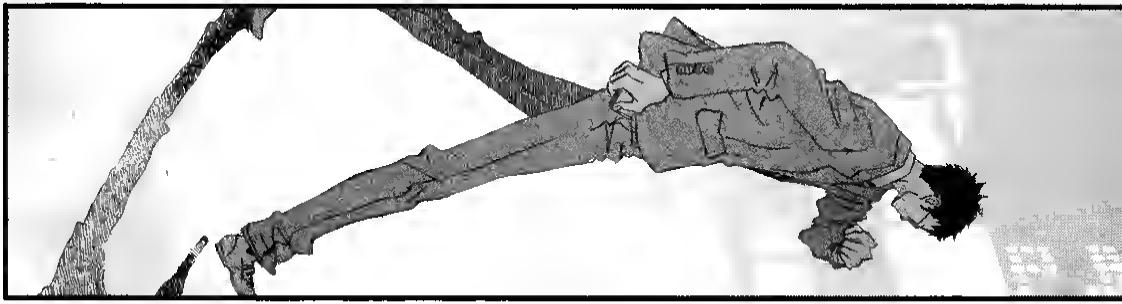
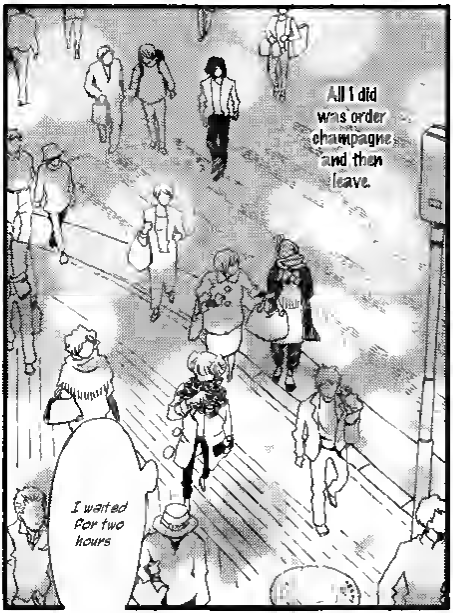


WHERE CHAMPAGNE BUBBLES GO

CH.24

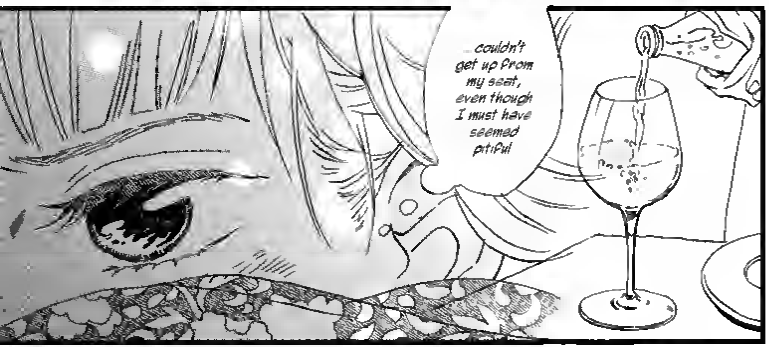


Stranding my neck like a faithful dog thinking to myself, "Could that be him? Could that be him?"
TSUTAYA
That was so humiliating...


All I did was order champagne and then leave.
I waited for two hours

Did something really important come up? I mean... What if he got into an accident or suddenly became ill? Thoughts like that kept going around in my head.
He was the one who invited me, yet he didn't even bother to call

When I remember his face from this afternoon, I just...
"I'll be waiting for you at mine."

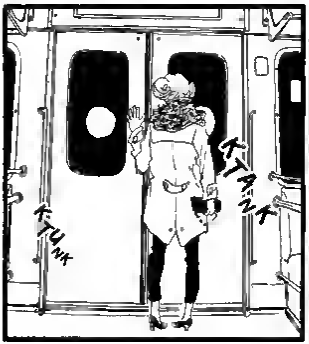

...couldn't get up from my seat, even though I must have seemed pitiful

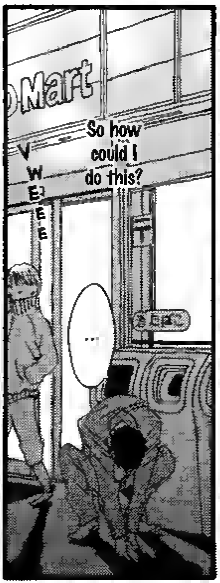
But!
I'm not yet at a stage
where it should reduce me to tears.
Even though it's embarrassing
Dry them up and keep on walking.
VRRR
!
In a glass of champagne,
all transient things seemingly evaporate into thin air.
Just like
the merry-making bubbles

VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
Sekine Kelichiro
Now?
...
VRRR
VRRR
YOU ARE NOW BEING CONNECTED TO VOICEMAIL.
Crap
Even if she keeps ignoring me,
I can't blame her.
She won't pick up... I knew it!

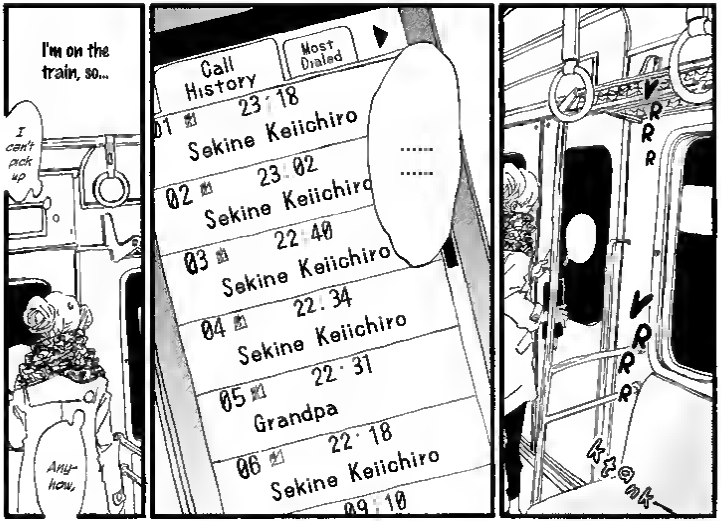
She came...
"If you are looking for the guest you had arranged to meet, I saw her around nine o'clock as scheduled."
"She was here just a moment ago..."

KTUNK
KTANK
PWaaaa

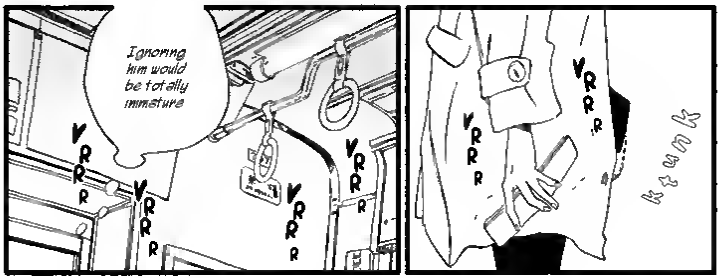

KTUNK
KTANK


Mart
So how could I do this?
WEEE
...

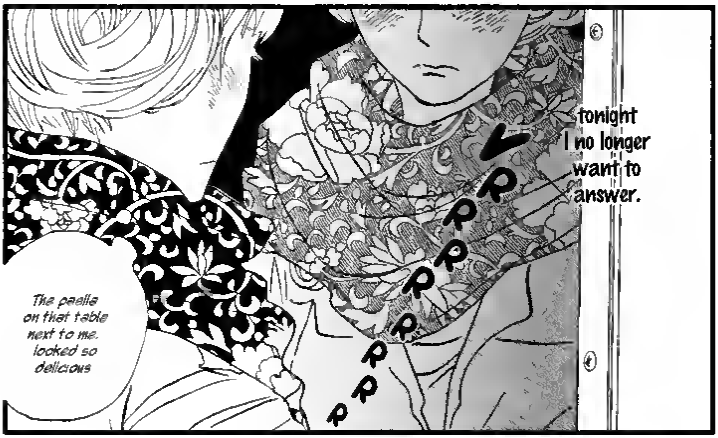
The granddaughter was
waiting for me...


I'm on the train, so...
I can't pick up
Anyhow,
Call History
Most Dialed
01 23:18 Sekine Keiichiro
02 23:02 Sekine Keiichiro
03 22:40 Sekine Keiichiro
04 22:34 Sekine Keiichiro
05 22:31 Grandpa
06 22:18 Sekine Keiichiro
09:10
.....
.....
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
k-a-nk-

This is the first time I've ever received calls from him, so he must actually be doing the calling.
If he ran into trouble or an accident, there should be plenty of other places he'd have to call before me
If it was something life-threatening, he wouldn't be calling me this many times.


Ignoring him would be totally immature
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
k-a-n-k

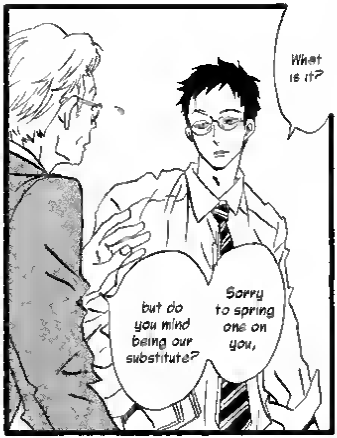
But,
the fact is, he stood me up
No matter the reason,


tonight I no longer want to answer.
RRRRRRRR
The paella on that table next to me, looked so delicious

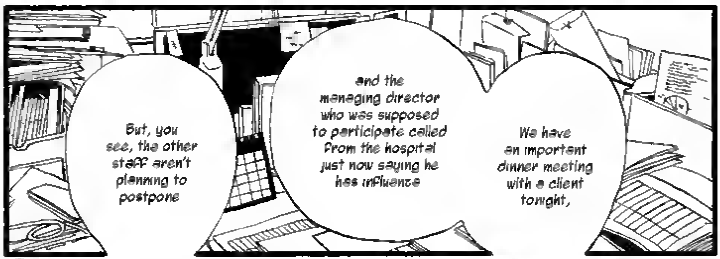
Text
I'm really sorry about today. The truth is, the train and bus I rode on ran into some trouble that caus delay, and then my phone ran out of batteries
The text you have compiled will not be saved
Bip
Click to Delete
Click to Save
Click to Delet
It sounds so unnatural
I would have liked to share one with him...
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR
VRRR

What's wrong with me? How could I not have prevented myself from making such a basic mistake?
If this was a business discussion,
It would have been easily resolved
Leaving any customer in the lurch for whatever vague reason before building up trust
would require
starting over with a clean slate
I prefer to apologize face to face
But it's too late to pay her a visit
rub
rub
ugh
START OVER WITH A CLEAN SLATE
KRRR

I'll...
drop by the shop tomorrow.
Let's see...
As previously noted, today marks the end of our consecutive holidays, so we will resume our regular talks.
Moving onto the progress of last year's spring project and business partnership with Daito Sangyo
SUNSET
At least that's what I had hoped.
I want to meet her face to face and apologize.
I look forward to seeing more of your efforts.
Going forward, let's keep in mind our overseas launch


What is it?
Sorry to spring one on you,
but do you mind being our substitute?

Alright— I'll just take some of it home
Just when you think it's all over, you get served with overtime
Crap.
Oh, hey, Sekine!
Hold on a sec?
THUD

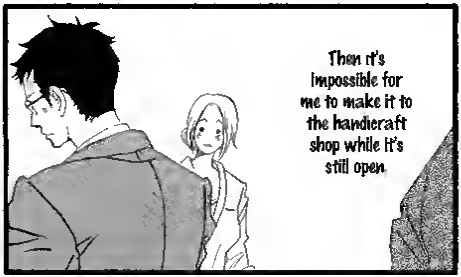

But, you see, the other staff aren't planning to postpone
and the managing director who was supposed to participate called from the hospital just now saying he has influenza
We have an important dinner meeting with a client tonight,

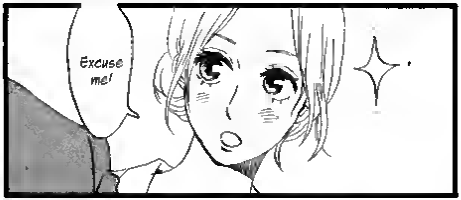
Overtime.

So the higher ups are asking for you,
since you're a part of the project as well

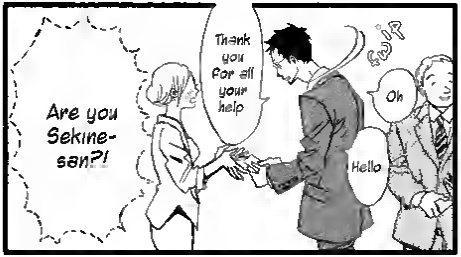
...I haven't got time for that!
If it keeps going like this

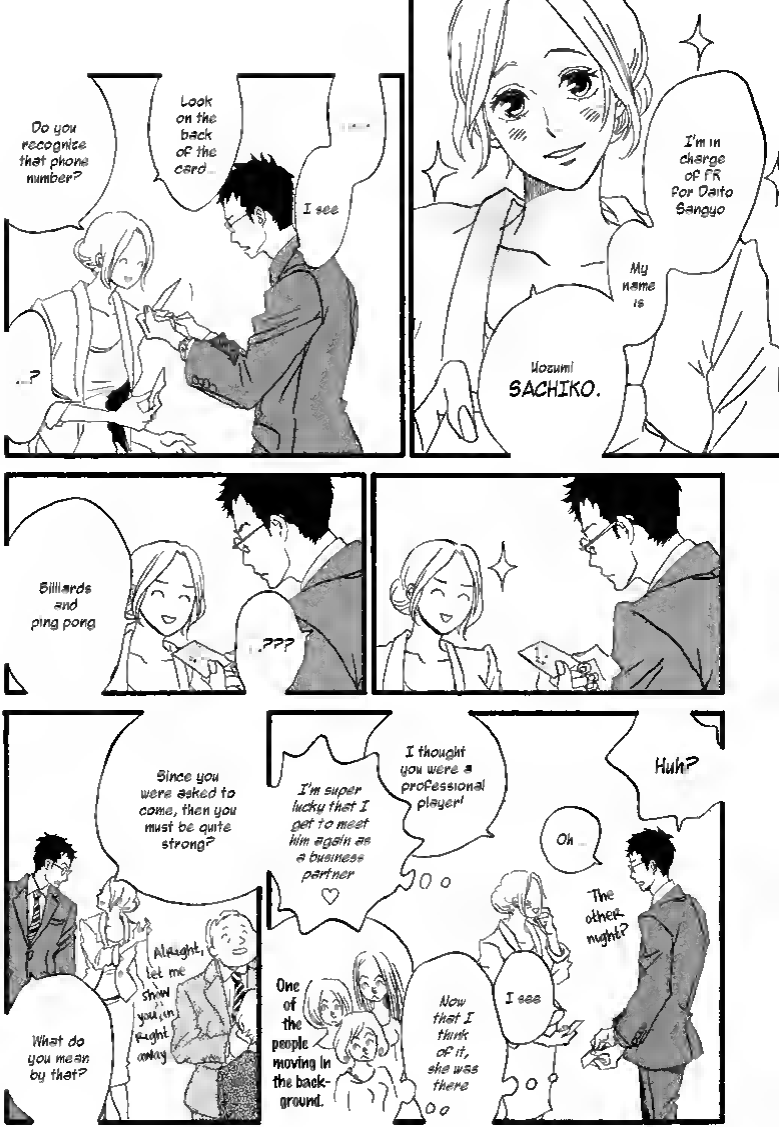
Yes
?


Then it's impossible for me to make it to the handicraft shop while it's still open.

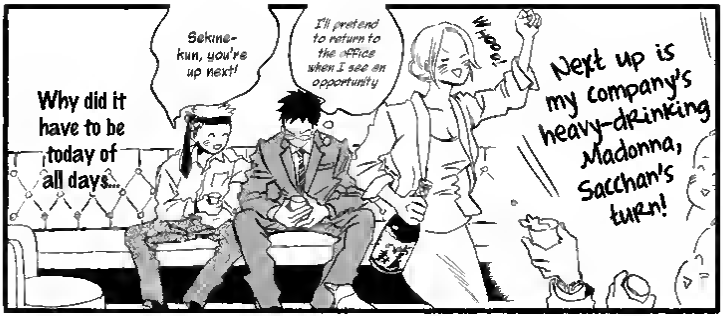

Excuse me!

You don't know?
I apologize, but have we met?
Like hell I would!

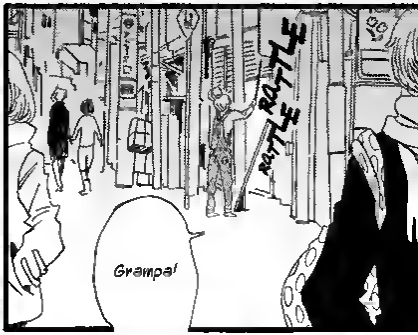

Are you Sekine-san?!
Thank you for all your help
Hello
Oh
?!?

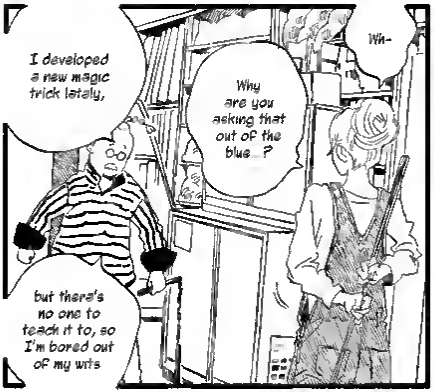

I'm in charge of FR for Daito Sangyo
My name is
Uozumi
SACHIKO.
Look on the back of the card...
Do you recognize that phone number?
I see
...?
Billiards and ping pong
...???
Huh?
Oh...
The other night?
I see
Now that I think of it, she was there
One of the people moving in the background.
I thought you were a professional player!
I'm super lucky that I get to meet him again as a business partner
♡
Since you were asked to come, then you must be quite strong?
Alright, let me show you in right away
What do you mean by that?

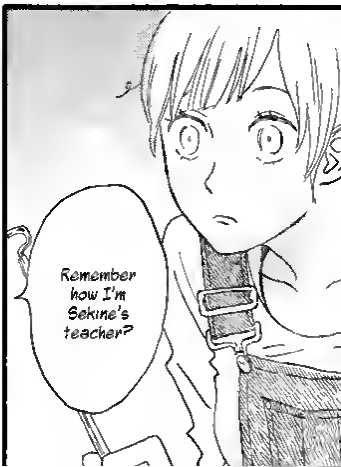
Airight, it's time for our monthly custom
Toyo Commercial Company VS Daito Sangyo's wine-tasting and drinking competition.
Whew! It's been a long wait!
CLAP
Woo ow!
What's this all about?
Haven't you heard?
In order to deepen the friendship between both companies,
watching with eagle eyes
once a month managers on both sides will bring out their best wines to battle. It started around summer of last year
Do I even need to be here?
Oh!
Is this the illusive sake from Dojima Brewery?
It's better to have more people on your team to tip the game on your side
Hahaha! Yamada-san, you sure know your wine!


Why did it have to be today of all days...
Sekine-kun, you're up next!
I'll pretend to return to the office when I see an opportunity
Wh-what?!
Next up is my company's heavy-drinking Madonna, Sacchan's turn!

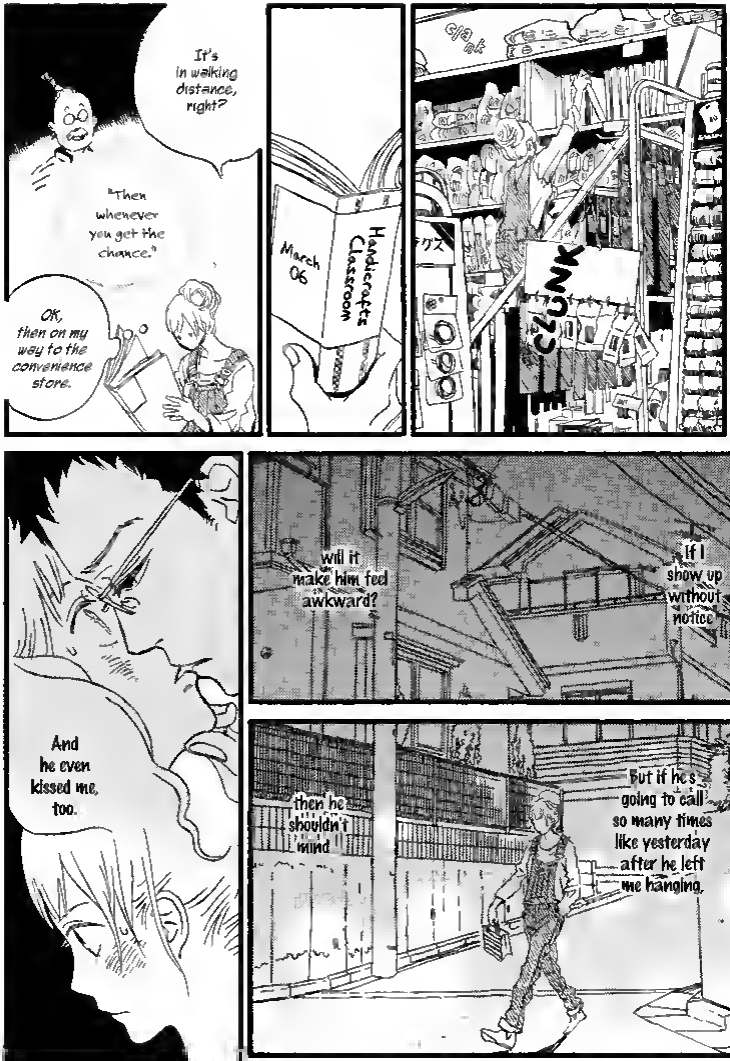
Yep!
Should I open up the shop?
What about tomorrow morning?
Oh, by the way

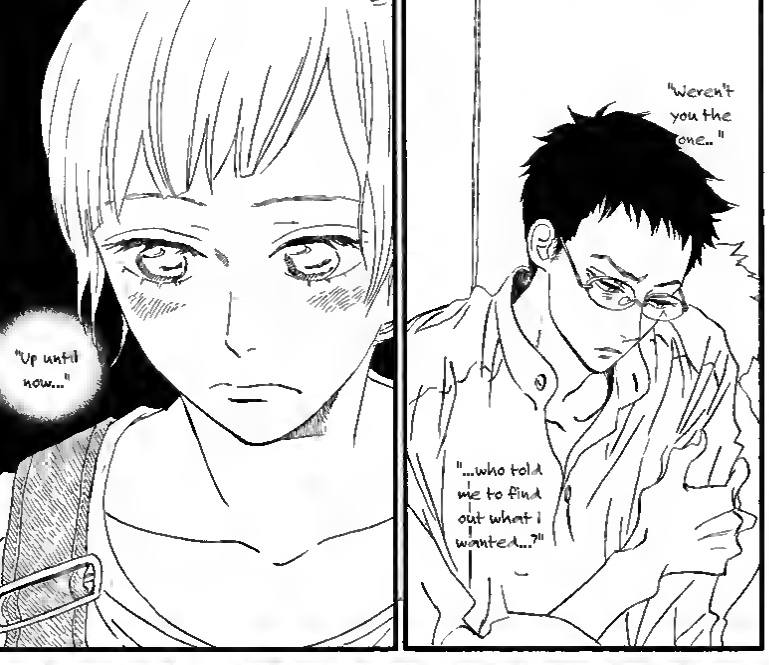

RATTLE
RATTLE
Grampa!

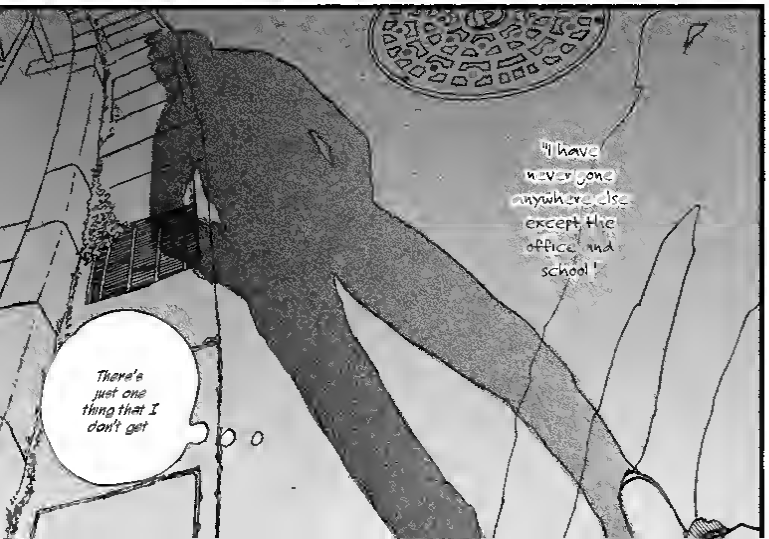

I developed a new magic trick lately,
but there's no one to teach it to, so I'm bored out of my wits
Wh-
Why are you asking that out of the blue...?


Remember how I'm Sekine's teacher?

give this to him for me?
Rustle
Alright...
What's inside?
It's secret!
I feel like you'll get to see him
Don't know about that
Then whenever you get the chance,
Where are you going?
To that cat gathering
right over there
What the heck?
I'll be leaving then
What is it?
Would this even work
as an excuse for us to talk?
キサ
....


It's in walking distance, right?
"Then whenever you get the chance."
OK, then on my way to the convenience store.
March 06
Handicrafts Classroom
CLUNK
Will it make him feel awkward?
If I show up without notice
But if he's going to call so many times like yesterday after he left me hanging,
then he shouldn't mind
And he even kissed me, too.


"Up until now..."
"...who told me to find out what I wanted..?"
"weren't you the one.."

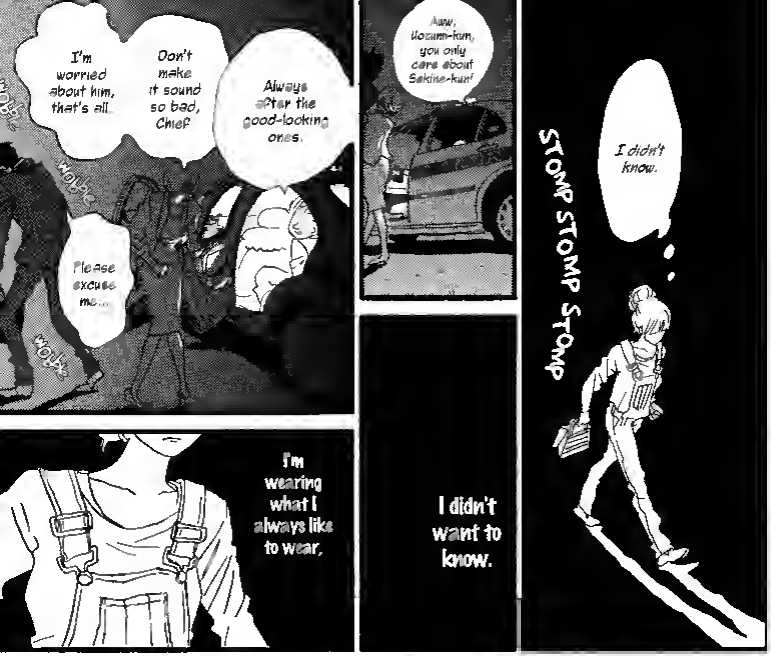

"I have never gone anywhere else except the office and school"
There's just one thing that I don't get

I don't think he was faking it
That desperate look on his face...
VROOOM
VROOM
TAXI
SWOOSH
HUH?
Whoa!
Wa-Wait!
SCREECH...

Look
Watch out for your step, Sekine-san. ♡
We've arrived at your home
Please let go

No
I think we should rest at the hotel a little while longer, don't you?
I'm going home

Next time we meet, we must play billiards
We must.
He he he
Beep


I didn't know.
STOMP STOMP STOMP
Aww, Uozumi-kun, you only care about Sakine-kun!
I didn't want to know.
I'm wearing what I always like to wear.
Always after the good-looking ones.
Don't make it sound so bad, Chief.
I'm worried about him, that's all.
Please excuse me...
WALK
WALK
but I can't believe I felt like running away like that.
No I shouldn't blame it on my overalls
Hello!
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
I went through hell last night
OW, OW, OW

Ah
BDUM
BDUM
BDUM
BDUM
CLANK
ROLL ROLL
Um...
I- I'm really sorry about the other night...
Oh, it doesn't really matter
But-
It's just constantly calling me
dozens of times until late at night
is kind of
annoying.